Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages
Commissariat aux langues officielles

Newsroom

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Tabling of the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Official Languages: The government delivers on its promise and presents a plan to revitalize official languages, but greater challenges lie ahead

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The federal government has kept its promise and delivered a plan this year to revitalize official languages. However, greater challenges now lie ahead, and the government will have to show even more focus and determination if it wants to achieve its objectives. This was the message delivered by the Commissioner of Official Languages, Dr. Dyane Adam, in her fourth annual report presented to Parliament today.

"The *Action Plan for Official Languages* is the result of three years of effort; I see it as a piece to be performed by a full orchestra. The score has been composed and the musicians know their parts. The time has now come for the much awaited symphony to be played so that our official languages see their role in Canadian society strengthened", the Commissioner said.

Dr. Adam emphasized that the shift from ideas to action requires sustained efforts that exceed those dedicated to the development of the plan: "We are only at the beginning, and there is a danger that the commitment will wane over time. The implementation of this plan requires a tremendous effort from each of the players. Every federal institution must play its part conscientiously and in accordance with its mandate."

Just as an orchestra needs a good leader, the action plan cannot be effectively implemented without consistent, strong political leadership. According to Dr. Adam, "The transition from one leader to another requires careful preparation and close attention to the score. There is no room for false notes."

The Commissioner is concerned about the government's ability to deliver on the objectives of the action plan. Past experience has shown that, in the area of official languages, the federal government has had difficulties living up to its own plans and meeting deadlines. "My annual report shows that far too often I am forced to play the role of a disciplinarian with regard to federal institutions. I have to follow up on my own follow-up studies before satisfactory and tangible results are achieved. The Canadian public will not tolerate such an approach to the implementation of the action plan. This is precisely why I am emphasizing transparent action and accountability on the government's part this year."

The objectives of the seven new recommendations in the Commissioner's annual report are to assist with the implementation of the plan, but also to make the government more accountable for its actions. Dr. Adam is asking the government to set standards for evaluating the results achieved under the action plan. As well, it is essential for all levels of government to collaborate if the objectives are to be

accomplished. The Commissioner is therefore asking the federal government to establish a framework to facilitate intergovernmental cooperation on official languages.

Consequently, one of the Commissioner's priorities over the next few years will be to ensure that the goals of the action plan are translated into tangible results for Canadian citizens: a better provision of services in both official languages, making both official languages an integral part of public service culture, greater support for official language minority communities, and increased bilingualism among young Canadians. "The composition we have before us is a daring one and the public's expectations are high. As the music is being played, I will listen with great attention, pointing out any false notes and insisting that corrections are made", Dr. Adam concluded.

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Information

To obtain a copy of the annual report, call 613-996-6368 or 1-877-996-6368.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS
Annual Report 2002-2003 of the Commissioner of Official Languages

Recommendation 1

The Commissioner recommends that the federal ministers responsible:

- establish an evaluation framework to assess the measures taken pursuant to the action plan as well as the results obtained;
- establish a framework for intergovernmental cooperation to encourage and facilitate federal cooperation with the provinces and territories regarding official languages;
- design a strategy for ongoing consultation and dialogue with official language majority communities to include them in efforts to enhance linguistic duality, especially as regards the promotion of bilingualism among Canadians.

Recommendation 2

The Commissioner recommends that the House of Commons and Senate committees on official languages:

- continue to closely monitor the actions taken regarding the *Action Plan for Official Languages* and annually convene the key individuals responsible for its implementation in order that they may report on measures taken and the results obtained.

Recommendation 3

With regard to the modernization of human resources management, the Commissioner reiterates and expands her 2001-2002 recommendation that the President of the Treasury Board:

- establish a plan to fully integrate linguistic duality into the activities and culture of the federal Public Service
  - by completing the revision of official languages policies and regulations in order to emphasize principles and values rather than rules;
  - by establishing an implementation schedule that takes into account the timeline proposed by the Commissioner for progressively eliminating non-imperative staffing;
  - by setting up a program to sensitize and mobilize public servants with respect to their rights and responsibilities in putting linguistic duality into practice;
  - by strengthening public service leadership regarding linguistic duality while taking into

account performance and ensuring that, upon their appointment, individuals named to senior positions are aware of the value of linguistic duality;
- by entrusting language training to the new Canada School of Public Service.

Recommendation 4

The Commissioner reiterates the recommendations of her 2002 study of the senior Public Service.

She recommends that the Clerk of the Privy Council:

- require deputy ministers and associate deputy ministers to have the same level of bilingualism as that required for other EXs in the Public Service and implement a formal language evaluation system.

She recommends that the President of Treasury Board and the President of the Public Service Commission ensure that:

- imperative staffing be normally required for assistant deputy minister positions open to candidates from outside the Public Service and that the appointment of candidates who do not meet the language requirements of the position be viewed as an exception.

Recommendation 5

The Commissioner recommends that the Minister of Canadian Heritage:

- encourage each provincial minister of education to produce an annual report on progress achieved both on the objective of doubling the proportion of bilingual high school graduates and on providing French-language instruction to 80% of the target school population covered by section 23 of the Charter;
- table an annual report on progress achieved nationally before the parliamentary committees on official languages.

Recommendation 6

The Commissioner recommends that the Minister of Health:

- ensure that federal-provincial-territorial health agreements are tailored to the particular needs of the official language minority communities of each province and territory, and that they include specific provisions on health services that must be offered in the minority language.

Recommendation 7

The Commissioner recommends that the Minister Responsible for Official Languages:

- examine and take all measures available to him so that the Capital of Canada will be declared officially bilingual.

The Commissioner reiterates the following two recommendations from her 2001-2002 Annual Report which were not implemented:

Recommendation 8

The Commissioner recommends that the Prime Minister:

- give the Ministerial Reference Group on Official Languages the status of a permanent committee, in order to stimulate leadership at the highest levels and to support implementation of the Action Plan for Official Languages.

Recommendation 9

The Commissioner recommends that the government:

- clarify the legal scope of the commitment set out in section 41 of the *Official Languages Act* and take the necessary action to effectively carry out its responsibilities under this provision.

Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages Leon Leadership Award

In 2002, the Commissioner introduced the OCOL Leon Leadership Award to honour the head of a federal institution who has distinguished himself or herself through leadership in promoting linguistic duality and implementing the Official Languages Program in his or her institution.

2002-2003 Leon Leadership Award

Farm Credit Canada

For 2002-2003, the Commissioner of Official Languages is honouring the head of a small government agency in Regina, Saskatchewan. The 2002-2003 Leon Leadership Award goes to **John Ryan, President and CEO of Farm Credit Canada (FCC)**. With this award, the Commissioner pays tribute to Mr. Ryan, who has demonstrated extraordinary leadership in his efforts to integrate official languages into the culture and daily activities of his organization, going well beyond the basic requirements of the Official Languages Program.

For FCC, offering service in both official languages is more than a requirement; it's a matter of respect and good business practice. To ensure exceptional service in both official languages, FCC periodically conducts follow-up calls and on-site audits to designated bilingual offices in order to check whether they actively provide bilingual service as required (including displays, publications and voice messages) and comply with their official language obligations.

Bilingualism is part of the way of life at FCC. French is spoken regularly at meetings, in the corridors, during teleconferences and at lunchtime, not only at the Loan Administration Centre in Moncton but also at the Risk Management Centre in Kanata and corporate headquarters in Regina. Throughout the country, Francophones, Francophiles and employees taking language training regularly speak French. Employees are actively encouraged to speak their preferred language.

FCC's senior management team also believes that management support is essential to the success of any initiative. To foster a workplace that is conducive to the use of both official languages, the senior management team has designated senior positions bilingual, regardless of the fact that all senior managers work in Regina, a region not designated bilingual for language of work. Consequently, senior managers are bilingual or soon will be. In addition, FCC has introduced "French Fridays" throughout the country. On Friday, a word or expression is e-mailed to all employees, who are encouraged to speak French. Employees taking language training thus have a golden opportunity to enhance their learning experience.

In its efforts to enhance the vitality of official language minority communities, FCC's corporate office actively promotes Francophone community events to its employees and encourages them to participate in various activities. Furthermore, the organization sponsors many projects in official language minority communities and has established a national committee with an employee from each region to ensure liaison with minority language groups. The committee identifies potential partnerships, sponsorships and in-kind contributions which could benefit minority communities.

The Commissioner congratulates Mr. Ryan and the FCC for their exemplary leadership in promoting linguistic duality to the public and within the organization.

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